

## Preface: Beijing and Its Daily Lives

Beijing's arduous experiences made its greatness. Over the last century, Beijing has experienced significant social changes in its urban landscape, internal spirit, population structure, and lifestyles. As Beijing has been China's political, cultural, and educational center for about eight hundred years, throughout the ages people have shown considerable interests on the political elites' activities in and around the royal spaces such as the Forbidden City, Summer Palace, Tian'an Men as well as the most widely recognized symbolism of the Chinese nation -- the Great Wall. It is natural that the political elites and their histories and stories have become the main themes of academic research and artistic creation.

In contrast, the daily lives of the ordinary Beijing people and their living spaces such as the Hutong 胡同, Siheyuan 四合院 and Zabadi'r 杂吧地儿 have been largely left behind. For this particular reason, since the era of the late Qing dynasty, the works of Arlington & Lewisohn (1935), Li Jiarui 李家瑞 ([1933]1988 ;1937), Li Weizu 李慰祖 (1948), Zhang Cixi 张次溪 (1951), Jin Shoushen 金受申 (1999), Chang Renchun 常人春 (1990), Qi Rushan 齐如山 (2010), Deng Yunxiang 邓云乡 (2015) have made significant contribution on the lacuna of Beijing people's daily lives and activities. This is also why Jin Shoushen (1906-1968) has been granted the name of "the expert of Beijing" (*Beijingtong*, 北京通). By focusing on the on-going lives and activities of ordinary Beijing people in contemporary Chinese society, this issue aims to exhibit the different aspects of the urban scenes as the continuation of Beijing's vicissitudes in the past hundreds of years.

The two papers entitled 'The Alienation of Spiritual Existence' and 'Belief or Leisure' discussed the transformation of the grassroots Beijing people's religious life by focusing on different popular temple festivals in Beijing, especially the Miaofeng Mountain Temple Festival. In the first paper, Yue Yongyi distinguished the different nature of "temple festival" (*Miaohui*, 庙会) and "temple fair" (*Miaoshi*, 庙市) by analyzing the historical context they were used and the social facts of the two words. In this way, the author aims to reveal that how Beijing's modernization process can be reflected by the transition of the usages of the two words. In the second paper, by describing the transformation of the Miaofeng Mountain Temple Festival in the past century, Wang Yaofeng and Yue yongyi indicate that although contemporary Beijing people's lifestyle has been impacted by social change, in a sense, the core part of the Bannerment's leisure as a kind of lifestyle is quietly returning in a different way.

In 'Legend of Nine Dragons and Two Tigers', Ju Xi traced the history of the nameless ancient temples located at Xizhimennei dajie and further pointed out that these static and decadent small temples are still influencing the hustle-and-bustle urban life in the nearby neighborhoods. The wonderful thick description would take the readers back to the Old Beijing. In 'Transformation of Living Space in Hutongs through the Process of Urban Development', Yang Qingqing observed that the limited living space of Hutong in Beijing have been squeezed by numerous skyscrapers; as a result, Hutong would turn to a "shell space" without any cultural meanings and human kindness. This crisis is symbolically interpreted by the author as the loss of cultural and spiritual meaning which have been carried by Hutong in past hundreds of years. By coincidence, Yue Yongyi also used the core concept of "empty" to refer to the negative aspects of the transition of the temple festival in his paper.

It seems that both Yang and Yue have shown their potential concerns on whether the symbolic spaces of the traditional Beijing culture such as Hutong and Siheyuan and their daily life can still be able to exist in the future. When these tradition spaces and everyday life have finally vanished from Beijing's landscape, most of the Chinese people would involuntarily become homesickers. In other words, this is not only the two authors' nostalgia but also the two authors' sadness about the great city.

The rickshaw drivers in Beijing is another conventional topic. The rickshaw drivers have been recognized by people as one of the 'key symbols' (Ortner 1973) of Beijing thanks to the works such as *Camel Xiangzi* (Lau 1945) and *Rickshaw Beijing* (Strand 1989). But according to Zhang Lijun, the rickshaw drivers who are currently working in the scenic spot of Shichahai 什刹海 are obviously different from their predecessors: in addition to their traditional role of providing transportation service, they are also preforming as the "missionaries of the culture" to guide the tourists to explore the local tradition in Beijing. Wang Yahong investigated the new characteristics of the vegetarian in Beijing, a group which stick themselves to a unique dietary preference. The author argued that, becoming a vegetarian is not only related to certain food choice, throughout the whole process every individual vegetarian is exploring his own pioneering identity of being fashionable.

Yang Beibei's paper analyzes Chinese foremen's migration experience to Zambia but none of her foreman informants is from Beijing. This excellent study both provides a different perspective to evaluate Beijing's privileged status in current China and indirectly explains why many Chinese have a common dream of becoming a Beijing People.

To sum up, Beijing is always a city of high degree of cultural diversity no matter it is yesterday, today, or tomorrow. The multi-dimensional aspects of ordinary Beijing people's daily lives show different faces of local traditions in Beijing and how these traditions continue to function as the dynamics of Beijing's development. In this sense, the "self-fluid" is a vivid metaphor to describe the social change of Beijing as well as its eternal cultural value.

As a result, this issue is named as "Beijing and Its Daily Lives". Truly, the daily life is a very broad topic, many scholars have documented the vanishing traditions and culture in Beijing (e.g. Lowe 1983; Shi 1995; Dong 2003; Leutner 2003; Chan 2008; Meyer 2008; Yue 2011; Yang 2015). Hopefully papers in this issue can shed new light on "Beijing and Its Daily Lives".

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